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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**The Honorable Doc Hastings**  
**Statement on the Endangered Salmon Predation Prevention Act**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs**  
**June 14, 2011**

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Thank you, Chairman Fleming for holding this hearing on H.R. 946, the Endangered Salmon Predation Prevention Act.

Since 1992, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has listed 28 populations of salmon—including 12 in the Columbia and Snake Rivers – as either threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

Northwest citizens have invested billions of dollars to fund significant federal, state, tribal and local salmon activities.

These efforts include a plan now before a federal judge – supported by the Administration, states and several upper and lower Columbia River tribes – that would ensure the continued operation of several major federal hydropower dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

Great progress has been made to recover salmon, as witnessed by several consecutive years of record or near-record runs. Yet, growing numbers of aggressive sea lions are consuming endangered salmon.

The Army Corps of Engineers reported late last year that the average number of sea lions observed at Bonneville Dam over the past three years increased by nearly 50% – from 83 to 124 per year.

Despite extensive efforts by federal, state, and tribal officials to discourage predation through aggressive nonlethal hazing, the Corps recently estimated that sea lions consumed over 6,000 salmon last year alone.

In 1994, Congress added Section 120 to the MMPA to allow lethal removal of sea lions that were eating salmon at the Ballard Locks of Seattle. However, extensive studies and attempts by states have demonstrated that this authority as written has proven inadequate and cumbersome.

Last December, a NOAA 18-member task force, comprised of federal, state and tribal scientists, concluded that current efforts authorized under Section 120 have been ineffective at controlling sea lions from preying on salmon.

Earlier this year, I applauded NOAA for defending its approval to states to use lethal removal to control sea lions that are eating alarming numbers of salmon on the Columbia River.

Unfortunately, last month, yet another lawsuit blocked this approval at a time when tens of thousands of salmon were returning to Bonneville Dam.

H.R. 946 and this hearing today are designed to find a common sense path forward to protect our substantial investment in salmon recovery and provide federal, state, and tribal fish managers the tools necessary to control sea lions.

This bipartisan legislation, similar to that introduced in prior Congresses, would provide temporary expedited authority for states and tribes to manage the sea lion problem while the states obtain longer-term authority through the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

The bill recognizes that four lower Columbia River tribes, as well as the states of Oregon and Washington, should be eligible to obtain permits to control predatory sea lions.

In addition, the proposal would require the Commerce Secretary to report to Congress on possible amendments to the Marine Mammal Protection Act to address conflicts between marine mammals and fish species listed under the ESA.

I again thank the Subcommittee for holding this hearing, and I look forward to hearing from the states and tribes represented here today on how this bipartisan bill might be further improved as it moves through the legislative process.